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Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, September 11, 2007

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Detroit Free Press

Macomb County news briefs

September 11, 2007

MT. CLEMENS: Mother held on charges of murder, child abuse

A Warren mother facing charges in the death of her 2-year-old son in June will have a pretrial conference Sept. 25 in Macomb County Circuit Court in Mt. Clemens.

Crystal Conklin, 27, was arraigned Monday before Judge Antonio P. Viviano, who continued her \$500,000 bond. She is in the Macomb County Jail in Mt. Clemens on first-degree murder and first-degree child abuse charges.

She is accused of fatally beating her son, Sean Sowards, who arrived at a hospital in a coma. Doctors determined he had been bashed in the head. He also had dozens of bruises on his body.

Trial against mom who killed daughters resumes today

September 11, 2007

FREE PRESS STAFF

The first-degree murder trial of a Macomb Township mother accused of killing her two young daughters continues this morning in Macomb County Circuit Court.

A psychologist for the defense is scheduled to testify and closing arguments and jury deliberations are expected to begin in the case against Jennifer Kukla.

Advertisement

The 30-year-old is accused of stabbing to death her daughters, Alexandra, 8, and Ashley, 5, in her trailer Feb. 4. Kukla, who has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, will not testify.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070911/NEWS04/70911021>

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Safe Sleep program gets Ruth Mott grant

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, September 10, 2007

By Ron Fonger

rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - A Ruth Mott Foundation grant will provide \$179,500 during the next two years to educate parents about infant safe sleep practices.

The Safe Sleep campaign was launched by the county Department of Human Services in 2002, when the number of sleep-related infant deaths reached 15. That number dropped to four by 2006, according to a news release.

Safe Sleep classes provide information about the safe way to put babies to sleep and are held throughout the community for expectant parents and those with infants younger than 12 months old.

Parents who attend the classes and need a safe bed for their baby are eligible to receive a free crib.

Safe Sleep class details: Etoya Hoey, (810) 760-2670.

- Ron Fonger

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MIRS Capitol Capsule, Friday, September 7, 2007

Welfare Service Given OK Audit

The state agency in charge of helping clear the way for permanent homes for foster care kids received a

lukewarm review today by the state Auditor General for not always properly completing paperwork that

specifically stated why children were removed from their foster parents.

The review of Child Welfare Services (CWS) within the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) also

urged the SCAO to seek legislation that would mandate Department of Human Services (DHS) caseworkers to show up at Foster Care Review Board hearings. Nearly 25 percent of the 58 foster care

cases the Auditor General looked into found that DHS workers failed to give the review board the

information it requested.

The Auditor General sat through six review board meetings in February 2006. In one county, one of the

five scheduled hearings was canceled because the DHS caseworker did not show up. In another county,

the DHS caseworker did not attend four of the five hearings.

Overall, the Auditor General reported eight findings and called the CWS "moderately effective" at

identifying barriers that inhibit permanent placement for foster care children and advocating for changes

that would speed up permanent placement for children in foster care.

Wayne County's decision to privatize a majority of its Friend of the Court operations is a good one for the families that use the system. If managed properly, the contract should generate more federal dollars for important child support and paternity programs.

Friend of the Court (FOC) is part of the family division of the circuit court system and geared in large part toward establishing guidelines for child custody, child support payment plans and collection and parental visitation. Wayne County's operation is the largest in the state with collections of almost \$314 million a year, or more than 21 percent of the statewide total.

But ask anyone who has waded through the system if it's efficient or friendly, and the answer is usually, no. There are more than 300,000 cases in the Wayne FOC system and 242 employees handling them.

Wayne Circuit Court Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly, who has proposed the privatization plan, says it takes nine months to get child support modifications through the system.

"That's unacceptable," she rightly says.

Privatizing the system won't automatically guarantee a turnaround, but it's needed to get the process started. Kelly says the winning contract bidder will be required to hire all 169 employees affected by the switch and has written into the proposal a requirement to hire another 56 people.

That's an extraordinary nod to the existing county workers because it forces a private contractor to hire a staff independent of its own review. Kelly said Monday that the county thought it was necessary to protect jobs even though some vendors have voiced their concern over having to hire everyone.

Representatives of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees say they'll fight the change because those members no longer would be represented by the union, whose contract expired Sept. 1.

While we support the change to a private vendor and agree that the county could use more people working in the system, staffing decisions ought to be left up to the company that wins the contract.

"We think based on a study we had done that there's no question that we need more people right away and that it be written into the contract," Kelly says. "We're critically understaffed."

She says the county wants a private company to increase staffing by 33 percent but operate with the current \$28 million budget. Wayne County pays about \$900,000 of that. The rest is federal money, and increasing the staffing, Kelly says, will improve collections and help increase the department's budget.

That may be true. It's likely a private vendor would determine that to be the case and do it anyway. Similar outcomes were achieved when the friend of the court's call center was privatized or contracted out three years ago. By all measures, that operation was a mess. People routinely complained they couldn't get anyone on the telephone.

Today the call center gets 28,000 calls a month and "proficiently" handles about "93 percent of those calls without further follow up," Kelly says.

Such results bolster Wayne County's decision to further turn to the private sector.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070911/OPINION01/709110320/1008>

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Muskegon Chronicle

Teen to face trial in brother's slaying

Tuesday, September 11, 2007

By John S. Hausman

jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com

Sixteen-year-old Brandon Parham will face trial for murder in the Aug. 27 shotgun slaying of his 20-year-old brother, Kenneth Parham.

Parham on Monday waived his right to a probable-cause hearing, and he was ordered bound over for trial on a charge of open murder before Chief Probate Judge Neil G. Mullally.

With an open murder charge, a conviction could range from manslaughter up to first-degree murder.

The Muskegon County Prosecutor's Office earlier opted to "designate" the youth to be tried as an adult in Family Court. If he is convicted, Mullally could then sentence him either as an adult, a juvenile or a juvenile with the option of imposing an adult prison sentence later if he violates probation.

"Designating" a juvenile defendant is the middle course between charging him as a juvenile or automatically waiving his case into adult court.

Parham is being held without bail at the Muskegon County Juvenile Detention Center.

Kenneth Parham died from a single shotgun blast to his abdomen. Muskegon Heights police were dispatched to the shooting just before 6 p.m. Police and prosecutors said the brothers had gotten into an argument at the Parham home, 3315 Eighth.

Just before the shooting, Brandon Parham had gone to his bedroom with a 16-gauge shotgun, Prosecutor Tony Tague said earlier. Kenneth came walking down the hallway, and Brandon shot him from about 10 feet away in the abdominal area, Tague said.

The gravely wounded Kenneth Parham fled across the street, collapsed on a neighbor's front porch, and the neighbor called 911. Brandon Parham and his friend fled, leaving the shotgun behind.

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Victim's son blames himself for failing to protect mother

Web-posted Sep 11, 2007

By SHAUN BRYON and STEPHEN FRY
Of The Oakland Press

Jason Brindley says he doesn't want to see his stepfather dead, just in jail.

"My mom was everything there is to me," said Brindley, standing outside of a Waterford Township apartment complex Monday night, surrounded by supporters. "I'm an adult, I didn't have to live with my mom, but I moved into the house to protect her.

**You can help
Anyone with
information
about Edward
Stenberg's
whereabouts is
asked to call
Waterford
Township
police at (248)
618-7527.**

"I should have attacked him when I had the chance." Oakland County Prosecutor's Office on Monday issued a four-count murder warrant against Edward Albert Stenberg, 57.

Stenberg is charged with first-degree premeditated murder, being a felon in possession of a firearm and two weapons charges, said Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Kelly Chard. If convicted, he would be imprisoned for life without a chance for parole.

Details of the killing emerged Monday. Laura Ann Stenberg's hands were bound with handcuffs and her legs tied together with duct tape in her home on the 5700 block of Pontiac Lake Road. She was shot in the head.

Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley said Stenberg was surprised by his wife's son coming home early, at about 10:30 a.m. Friday. Stenberg ran out and drove off in a pickup truck, while the son pursued and threw an object at the pickup. The truck was found Friday night at a friend's home, but Stenberg was not there.

Besides family and police searching for the Waterford Township man accused of shooting his wife to death, his lawyer also wants to talk to him - to convince him to turn himself in.

Defense attorney Charles D. Toby said Monday that the Friday slaying was "unfortunate and tragic."

Toby represented Stenberg in a 2005 felony assault case stemming from domestic violence against his wife.

Toby called Stenberg's cell phone and left a message after reading newspaper reports that police were seeking him.

"I attempted to call him," Toby said. "I don't know if he has (his phone). But it's obviously working. I told him that he should contact me, and I'll try to help him. He should turn himself in I to avoid something happening to him or to any other person. It's a tragic situation here, obviously."

On Friday, the Oakland County Sheriff 's Fugitive Apprehension Team and the Michigan State Police bomb squad helped with the search as Waterford Township's special response team searched various homes where Stenberg was thought to have been.

"It's been a very long weekend," Chief Daniel McCaw said.

Toby represented Stenberg when he was charged with assault with intent to cause great bodily harm less than murder, in an assault that occurred Sept. 12, 2005.

Stenberg pleaded no contest to that charge, serving a year in jail and receiving two years of probation. Because Stenberg is believed to have used a gun and fled the scene, he is in violation of his probation.

In court, Laura Stenberg stood by her husband, telling prosecutors she did not want him jailed, and she wanted to have contact with him. She filed for divorce in summer 2003, but both sides asked to dismiss the case seven weeks later.

Brindley said Stenberg was always abusive toward his mother.

"It's textbook domestic violence," Carley said. "That's why we've come so far in domestic violence cases, we understand the mindset of the victim and why we often need to pursue prosecution even without the assistance of the victim. It's really too bad."

Toby said he is surprised at the allegations against Stenberg.

"He does not come off with the appearance of someone who is violent," Toby said. "He was a quiet individual with a low tone and he did not, when I talked with him, raise his voice or act in a manner that would show a temper."

Toby said Laura Stenberg even visited his office in Sylvan Lake to help her husband with his case. She then told the lawyer that she and her husband had together purchased the blackjack with which he had beaten her, Toby said.

Even when Stenberg was ordered to have no contact with his wife, she still called him as his previous case progressed through the court.

Toby fears this case will affect prosecutors and judges looking at instances of domestic violence.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Lisa Gorcyca, who heads the domestic violence unit, said she and other prosecutors in her unit already look closely at cases, fearing that if they are not handled properly they could lead to further violence.

"In every case, it is always a consideration that we have," Gorcyca said. "Is there going to be a next time? Is the next time going to be worse? Will it be tomorrow's or next week's murder? We don't want a next time."

But they happen, Gorcyca said, noting a recent case of a man who lasted about a month on parole.

"I had a guy recently who went away for years, got out and beat up his new girlfriend," Gorcyca said. "When someone repeats, the original domestic violence prosecutor gets it. We are intimately aware of all the details, the history, usually the victim."

Toby thinks prosecutors will get tougher on defendants.

"They are going to be looking at these cases with more scrutiny than ever before and take a long hard look before a prosecutor agrees ... to plea bargaining and sentencing agreements," Toby said. "The problem with the domestic violence cases is you can't put everyone into the same pot and look at everyone the same and have a general policy."

Contact staff writer Stephen Frye at (248) 745-4634 or steve.frye@oakpress.com.

Possible free medical treatment for children

By Kayla Kiley, Cadillac News

REED CITY — Are you under 18 years of age with burn injuries, spinal cord damage, orthopedic conditions or a cleft lip or palate?

If you are, you might receive free treatment.

To see if you are eligible, go to the Child Care Clinic from 9 to 11 a.m. Wednesday at United Methodist Church, 503 South Chestnut Street in Reed City.

A team of physicians will screen potential patients for their eligibility to receive treatment from Shriners Hospitals for Children. Preregistration is advised. If you do not have transportation to the clinic, mention it when preregistering, and transportation will be provided. Eligibility is not based on the financial need of the child.

If a child is eligible for treatment, “the patient will never, ever get a bill,” said James Lentz, former president of Lakeland Shrine Club.

“Our goal is to improve children’s quality of life,” he said. “If a child is treatable, (the child) will be treated. We don’t put limits on anything.”

Lentz advises those who have been turned down by their insurance company to come to the clinic for a screening.

“If you’ve heard from your insurance company things like your residual deformities or scarring is cosmetic, we can help,” Lentz said. “While the insurance company may tell you it’s cosmetic, Shrine is not operated under insurance rules. We do things routinely that insurance doesn’t pay for.”

Lentz said there is a reasonable possibility that a child’s condition can be helped by the specialized care provided by Shriners Hospitals for Children.

“We have doctors from plastic surgeons and back surgeons to physical therapists,” he said. “The list of what they don’t treat is much shorter than what they do treat.”

After the screening, eligible children from the greater Cadillac area will have appointments at Shriners Hospitals for Children in either Chicago or Cincinnati. Housing and transportation services are free. Shriners Hospitals for Children is an international hospital system with 18 orthopedic hospitals, three burn hospitals and one hospital covering orthopedic, burn and some spinal care.

For nearly 85 years Shriners Hospitals for Children has provided free medical care to more than 835,000 children with orthopedic conditions, burn injuries, spinal cord injuries, among others. Shriners Hospitals for Children are funded by Shrine Clubs; each club has their own way of raising money through donations, fund-raisers, events and raffles.

To make an appointment with Child Care Clinic, call (800) 331-7790, (616) 942-1581 or e-mail Judy McDowell at saladintrust@tds.net. The clinic will take walk-ins if there is room, but those with appointments will be screened first.

Children must be accompanied by their legal guardian. There is no need to bring medical history documents.

If you can’t make the date, call (800) 331-7790 and ask about the regular clinics at the Shrine Center in Grand Rapids. If you need transportation to the Grand Rapids clinic, your local Shrine Club will help.

Your local connection

About the clinic

- What: Child Care Clinic
- When: 9 to 11 a.m. Wednesday
- Where: United Methodist Church, 503 South Chestnut Street in Reed City

- Who: Children under 18 years old
- Why: People living with conditions from burn injuries and spinal cord damages to orthopedic conditions and cleft lips may be eligible to receive full treatment, free of charge.
- Preregistration is recommended: Call (800) 331-7790, (616) 942-1581 or e-mail Judy McDowell at saladintrust@tds.net. The clinic will take walk-ins if there is room, but those with appointments will be screened first.
- Transportation: If you do not have means to get to the clinic, make note of it when calling to pre-register.
- What to bring: Children must be accompanied by their legal guardian. No need to bring medical history documents.
- Other clinics: Can't make the date? Call (800) 331-7790 and ask about the regular clinics at the Shrine Center in Grand Rapids.

Services available for:

- Cleft lip, palate and other facial clefts, birth deformities involving the skull and face
- Maxillofacial surgery, developmental deformities of the jaw requiring orthognathic surgery
- Hemifacial microsomia
- Craniofacial deformities
- Apert/Crouzon/Pfeiffer Syndrome
- Treacher Collins Syndrome
- Ear deformities
- Microtia
- Breast deformities
- Congenital pigmented nevi
- Facial nerve paralysis
- Hemangiomas and vascular malformations

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Senate Republicans' cuts don't add up to sensible state budget plan

September 11, 2007

If Republicans in Lansing are as good as their word, this week could reveal whether they dare actually to balance the budget without a tax hike. But it has to be better than the half-loaf list unveiled last week by Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, who threw out \$1 billion worth of numbers too vague to be of much use.

Bishop's list included another early retirement program, which Gov. Jennifer Granholm has already rejected and which makes little long-term sense. Also on the list: concessions from state employees that would have to be negotiated. And it's one thing to say you can cut nearly \$200 million out of state health and human services programs, and another thing to show line by line where the supposed savings occur.

Advertisement

Combined with the Rochester Republican's proposal that House Democrats vote for a tax hike while the Senate cuts -- a combination that is supposed to close the \$1.8-billion budget gap -- the strategy still smacks of politics more than policy finesse. It's all about isolating tax votes for electioneering, rather than bringing the state's books into balance.

The Senate Fiscal Agency is supposed to provide a more detailed look today at ways to slash the budget without a tax hike, which may provide the first honest assessment of how dire the situation really is. The \$1.8-billion gap between revenues and projected spending for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 represents nearly a 10% shortfall for the combined school aid and general funds.

By now, almost everyone seems agreed that Michigan must restore its 4.4% income tax rate, at least temporarily, although that alone will not be sufficient. Many cuts will still be required, and sentencing reform and changes in public retirement benefits must also be started quickly to slow the growth of those expenses. This all has to be wrapped up in one big agreement, so lawmakers can hold their noses and vote for it *together*.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070911/OPINION01/709110328/1068/OPINION>

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MIRS Capitol Capsule, Friday, September 7, 2007

Bishop Proposes \$1B In Cuts

Senate Majority Leader Mike **BISHOP** (R-Rochester) called today on the Senate Appropriations Committee to discuss Tuesday a plan to cut \$1 billion from the state budget as a way to fill more than half of the estimated \$1.75 billion deficit in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 budget that starts Oct. 1. Senate Republicans then asked the Democratic-controlled House members to resolve the remaining \$662 million gap.

Details of the "spending and reform cuts" Senate Republicans are calling for are fairly general and

Bishop's office was unable to return calls to provide more specifics after releasing the plan at 5 p.m. this evening.

The list of cuts and eliminations provided to the media included:

- Comprehensive Transportation Funds \$5.0 million
- Department of Community Health \$78.6 million
- Department of Corrections \$50.0 million
- **Department of Human Services \$116.8 million**
- Other departmental cuts \$23.4 million
- Early-out retirement \$190 million
- State employee economics \$75.4 million

Bishop also wants to remove the Governor's \$332.7 million in departmental increases and is banking on

\$215 million in one-time money from a quirk in the new Michigan Business Tax (MBT) (See "**SBT-MBT**

Overlap Worth \$220 Million," 8/2/07). The House would have to make up the remaining \$662.1

million either in cuts or revenue increases.

"Under this plan, both chambers work together in a bipartisan fashion and each present part of a plan for

final passage and a signature from the governor," Bishop said.

The Senate Fiscal Agency will also present options for a deficit-elimination package comprised solely of

spending reductions and government reforms.

Bishop is putting the proposal forth in light of a long Thursday session in which the House failed to take a

vote on a tax increase (See "**Finger Pointed Over Pending Shutdown**," 9/7/07).

"The House has made clear that it prefers a solution based on revenues," Bishop said. "Until we see such

a plan, we will continue to move forward with our own plan without a tax hike."

Greg **BIRD**, spokesman for House Speaker Andy **DILLON** (D-Redford Twp.) said he doesn't understand

why Bishop has waited to put these cuts forward.

"Press releases are not going to solve our fiscal problems. Real bipartisan solutions are," Bird said.

"Senator Bishop had a chance to make a deal last evening on a comprehensive proposal and he walked

away. If the Senator had the ability to make these types of cuts and reforms, why is he waiting until the

11th hour to do so?"

Though he hasn't seen the details of the plan, Bird questioned the negative effect the major cuts would

have on essential services and services that aid the state's most vulnerable.

Bishop said cuts and reforms have been on the Senate's plate since the process began. "In the interest of full disclosure and public understanding, we are presenting to the public what we have discussed in private meetings with the House and the Governor," he said "Our position from the beginning has been that cuts and reforms are the best option, while Democrats have called for revenue. It is now time for House members to decide if they can move forward with revenue legislation to fix the \$662 million gap, or will they accept a Senate plan of \$1.7 billion in cuts and reforms." Today's news comes after both Dillon and Bishop appeared on Paul W. **SMITH**'s morning radio show on WJR radio in Detroit during which Dillon proposed both the House and Senate take their difference to "binding arbitration," a suggestion Bishop dismissed out of hand.

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Article published Sep 11, 2007

Shop with a Cop program a go

By Lisa Roose-Church
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Can you hear the jingle of Santa's sleigh?

The Livingston County Sheriff's Department can as it gears up for its fifth annual Shop with a Cop program that pairs underprivileged children in the community with a police officer to shop for Christmas gifts.

In 2005, the program helped 70 children, and last year, the program helped more than 100 children.

The goal for this year is simple — to exceed 2006's numbers during the shopping trip to Wal-Mart that's set for Dec. 1.

Deputy Anthony Clayton said the department is accepting donations and asking people to purchase a gift card from Wal-Mart to donate to the program.

The dollar amount each child receives to spend will depend on the amount of money raised for this year's program.

Typically, each child has been able to spend about \$100.

Gift cards can be purchased at Wal-Mart during regular business hours and brought to the Sheriff's Department from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

The department is at 150 S. Highlander Way, near Howell High School and the Law Center.

The Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies in Livingston County are working in conjunction with the Department of Human Services and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Livingston County to identify children to participate in this year's program.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Lisa Roose-Church at (517) 552-2846 or at lrchurch@gannett.com.



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ISMAEL AHMED
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Sheryl Thompson (810) 760-2645 or Mark E. Evans (810) 422-0115

Community Partners in Action hosts open house at Durant Tuuri Mott Elementary School

Sept. 11, 2007

FLINT – Students, parents and community members can learn about the new services at the Community Resource Center at Durant Tuuri Mott (DTM) Elementary School during an open house from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 13.

Community Partners in Action brings together needs-based programs from community agencies to provide families with access to dental care, parenting programs, teen programs, state assistance counseling, tutoring and a host of supportive services through the Genesee County Department of Human Services' Family Resource Center located at the elementary school, 1430 W. Third Ave. in Flint. Local state legislators have been invited to attend.

Along with the resources of the school and DHS, Metro Housing Partnership, Eastern Seals, Shelton Automotive, the Children's Museum, Kettering University, Hamilton Community Health Network, Planned Parenthood and the city of Flint offer needs-based services designed to assist at-risk children and their families. Metro Housing and Kettering University fund a full-time community resource coordinator.

"We look forward to this collaboration and the ability to serve the community with one-stop shopping for needed supports," Genesee County DHS Director Sheryl Thompson said. "Children and the Durant Tuuri Mott school community can expect improved quality of life due to these much needed services."

Visitors also can enjoy an ice cream buffet and win raffle prizes while learning more about the services offered.

The Community Partners in Action are dedicated to fostering healthy development in DTM children and offering sustainability for their families. Community Partners in Action hopes to aid in alleviating social problems such as poor dental health, teen pregnancy, youth detachment and family instability.

The Family Resource Center at DTM was opened in 2003 as one of the first in the state as part of Gov. Granholm's initiative to link human services and priority schools. Since its creation, the Family Resource Center at DTM has had profound impacts on student attendance and achievement and was recognized at the Governor's Faith Based and Community Initiative Summit in 2006 as an example of effective partnership-building. The center is now one of 54 similar sites around the state where DHS leadership brings community partners together in innovative ways to help families.

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs